

## “David: Lose Bad Decisions”

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October 23, 2011

I do want to encourage you this morning to open your Bible to two passages in the Old Testament: the Book of II Samuel chapter 11 and the Book of Psalms chapter 51. If you are a first time guest or visitor with us, we have been making a journey this fall throughout the Old Testament looking at this concept of what are the things in our lives that we need to lose so to be in a better position for God to work through us, with us, in us and among us. So we've talked about losing self-reliance, losing compromise, losing bad influences and all sorts of different things. But today we come to a topic that every one of us can relate to because none of us is perfect. Every one of us has made bad decisions; every one of us has one day waked up to some level or some extent saying, “What have I gotten myself into?”

Today I've got some blessed curses, so to speak; I've got a double-edged sword because we will study one of the great men of the Bible. In fact, if you look at your Old Testament history, if you ask anybody who even today is a faithful follower of the religion we know as Judaism and ask who the big three in the Old Testament are, there is no question about it. It is Abraham, Moses and David. Those are the big three. Now you could debate which one has a greater priority. After all, all the conflict in the Middle East is a big family discussion on who is the true descendant of Abraham. Every year the Jewish people celebrate coming out of Egypt with the exodus celebration known as the Passover, in which Moses lead them. But it was David whose name still rings true in modern Israel today when you visit the City, not of Abraham, not of Moses, but you go to the City of David because it was David who expanded the kingdom more than any of the three monarchs. It was David whose passion to see God move in His people's lives was of such greatness. Yet, even this great man, even this man who did so much, served so much, and as we read through the Psalms, the Holy Spirit used him to write so much of what we

even sing as a Christian congregation, we see that even David messed up.

And I've got some hope for you today: I never want to excuse a bad decision; I would never come to you and say that's just part of being human. No, I'm not excusing it, but we've all fallen into the trap of listening to the wrong voices, we've all fallen into the trap of going into the wrong places and doing the wrong things. The question is when we find ourselves there, what do we do to get out of it? So the story today is not so much how David got into the mess but how he got out. In II Samuel chapter 11 we have a famous story that will forever be tied to the name of David; a man who expanded the kingdom, a man who defeated the enemies of the Israelites, a man who did so much but will always be connected with a woman named Bathsheba.

II Samuel 11: 1-6: "1And it came to pass, after the year was expired, at the time when kings go forth to battle, that David sent Joab, and his servants with him, and all Israel; and they destroyed the children of Ammon, and besieged Rabbah. But David tarried still at Jerusalem. 2And it came to pass in an eveningtide, that David arose from off his bed, and walked upon the roof of the king's house: and from the roof he saw a woman washing herself; and the woman was very beautiful to look upon. 3And David sent and enquired after the woman. And one said, Is not this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite? 4And David sent messengers, and took her; and she came in unto him, and he lay with her; for she was purified from her uncleanness: and she returned unto her house. 5And the woman conceived, and sent and told David, and said, I am with child. 6And David sent to Joab, saying, Send me Uriah the Hittite. And Joab sent Uriah to David."

The famous story, the "blip" on the radar of David's life, was this illicit relationship with a woman he had no business being with and with the consequences, as we'll see in just a moment, of a child born out of wedlock and the woman's husband who will be found dead at the hand of David. It's a mess, so to speak. But almost like cooking, what I want you to see today is there is a recipe for bad decisions. I want to talk about the recipe for bad

decisions and I want to talk about how to resolve bad decisions in our lives.

So let's talk about the recipe that is here in chapter 11. Now let me confess to you that I am not a cook, I am not a chef. I have basically three things that I am capable of making without any help. I can make macaroni and cheese; I can make instant pudding of any flavor; and on Saturday morning I make something our kids call "Daddy Toast" for breakfast. That's all I can do. My wife is an absolutely fabulous cook. People ask me all the time what's your favorite restaurant? I say, "Whatever Traci's cooking." But you know there are times in life when she is busy; three boys, teaching Bible study, serving at the school. There are times in life when time just catches up with us and in those times she will set out a box or a piece of paper with directions and all of the ingredients and say, "Put this together and don't divert from the instructions." It's a recipe. And I will stare over the flour and the eggs and whatever else we're making and I get real nervous because I know this is not my gift; I'm not good at this. But do you know what I've discovered? If you follow the directions, no matter if you're completely unskilled in cooking, guess what happens? The product essentially comes out as the product was designed to be when you follow the recipe.

The reason I tell that story is this: I'm going to talk today about the recipe for a bad decision. It doesn't matter how godly you are, how righteous you are, or how pure your motives are. Listen to me: if King David can fall into it, so can you. If King David can find himself in a situation of compromise and ultimately make a bad decision, then who are we to say that won't happen to me. Who are we to say I'm stronger than that. What we're going to discuss today is the recipe for making a bad decision - if you do these things then I promise you a mess. If you do these things you will end up cooking a dish and therefore having to eat what you have cooked.

So what's the first item? The first thing on the recipe, so to speak, is this: it is personal. What do you mean it is personal? Notice in verse 1, the very last statement: "But David tarried still at Jerusalem." David

was a king and his role was not to build the temple; that was going to be Solomon's role. His role was to expand the kingdom. What God told him to do was every time the weather gets good, every time the armies are refreshed and refurbished, go out and take more land; that's your job. He woke up one morning, it was the time to go to war and he said I don't want to go; I'd rather stay back at the plushness of Jerusalem.

In other words, the first ingredient for the recipe of bad decisions is not doing what God has asked you to do or not being where God wants you to be. Now that can apply to if you're married, if you're single, if you're not serving and you are supposed to be serving, if you're not giving and you are supposed to be giving, if you're not doing and you're supposed to be doing. In other words, the first ingredient is when we wake up and find out that what we're doing in life, in our personal relationships, in our relationships to God, is not what God would have for us. We tarry at Jerusalem. As soon as you're not where God wants you to be, you're going to get in a mess. If He says I need you to be doing this and you're not doing it then you're in trouble. If He says I need you to stop this and you don't stop, wherever He says to be and you're not, that's the first ingredient of the recipe for a mess because it didn't stop with just that.

It continued beyond being personal to a specific, or there is a position. I want you to notice what happens in II Samuel 11:2. It says at eveningtide he got out of his bed and he went to the roof. Now you may be thinking to yourself is a man not allowed to get a midnight snack? Is a man not allowed to stretch because after all, we've all had those nights when we can't sleep. I mean, there is a battle going on where he's supposed to be and he has no control over it. So what's wrong with taking this little breather in the night? Well, there are several things and primarily is this: when he got up and got out of bed, it doesn't say he went to the kitchen for that piece of cake he knew he shouldn't eat. It says he purposefully went up to the roof.

If you've been to modern-day Israel and seen where the fortress of David's

palace was, he overlooked what we now call the City of David. He had the highest house; he had the penthouse, for lack of better terms. And he could look out over all of the other houses. The reason this is significant is this: in his day the servants in the land, both the men and the women, when they had put in their hard, grimy, dirty day and gotten their kids to bed and the house settled then one of the things they would frequently do was to go to the roofs of their houses and they would bathe. They would clean themselves; they would relax and refresh themselves just by getting clean in the crispness of that Middle East air.

The position that David allowed himself to get into is this: when he got out of bed and went on the roof, he knew what the people in the houses below him were doing. And I've got a sneaky suspicion he was trying to get a peek, if you know what I mean, because he knew who was going to be on the roof. He knew the house of everybody. In fact, in a minute they will say is this not Uriah's wife. In other words, you realize that Uriah was the lead general in his army. They had dined together; he knew where they lived. He knew where their housetop was; he knew the routines. This was a dear friend. It's almost as if he got in a position to say I just want to sneak a peek to see if I can get away with it. When we allow ourselves to be in a wrong position because we're in the wrong place, there is a mess brewing.

Parallel the New Testament: there is a man we know as Peter, the apostle. The man who was so gregarious to defend Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane that he cuts off the ear of Malchus and Jesus has to put it back on. He basically said, "Jesus, if You're going down, I'm going down with you." So they make it all the way to Jesus' trial and the Gospel of John says that John and another apostle went in to the trial to observe everything but Peter stayed out on the porch. And when Peter was out on the porch, no longer was he in the presence of Jesus; no longer was he in a position of defending Jesus. He soon found himself in a position of condemning and betraying Jesus. The lady came up and the families came up and said, "Who are you? Are you not a Galilean? Do you not know Him? Do you not walk with Him?" And he vehemently denied his relationship. When we aren't where we're

supposed to be, we put ourselves in a position for bad decisions to occur.

That leads to the third ingredient of the recipe: there is a process. Let me show you what that process is. Look at the rest of verse 2; it says and there on the roof was Bathsheba. Now understand I do believe that in some way, shape or form, when we find ourselves not where God wants us that the devil is in that. I believe the devil is in getting us to be in the wrong position. But do you understand that when we've listened to the whispers of the devil in ingredient one and ingredient two, he comes out with a full-blown bazooka at level three! When the third ingredient comes in, he says on the roof, it wasn't vacant; it wasn't too late at night - there was Bathsheba. And he saw with his eyes that which was tempting, that which was desirable, that which as the story is told he could not go without. That is the process that happens in making bad decisions. When we're not where God wants us to be, we put ourselves in a position of compromise, the next step is we are actually enticed with the opportunity. And it will be right in front of you and it will not be hard to get. It will not be difficult to attain. Why? Because we have already come to the third ingredient.

But there is a fourth. There is a priority that takes place when we get to this point. I want you to see verse 3. "David sent and enquired after the woman. And one said, Is not this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite? And David sent messengers." He did not listen to his wise counsel. He did not listen to people who said this is the wife of one of your top generals. He did not listen when someone said do you not have enough entertainment around here, do you need more? And he actually involved getting other people to facilitate his rebellion against God. You say what is the priority of a bad decision? When you get to this point in making bad decisions it doesn't matter who is involved or what is at stake; you just want satisfaction. You just want what you want and you want it now.

Do you see how these bad decisions take place in our lives? It just starts with a simple being in the wrong place at the wrong time. Then it escalates to being

in a position that has the potential for compromise. And then there is the opportunity, the enticement, to fall into that trap. And then we have this attitude of I deserve it; I'm entitled to it; it's already here, why not. It's a frightening priority. That's the priority of a bad decision. A bad decision ultimately is made when the only person we desire to satisfy is us. And oftentimes we can couch these bad decisions as I'm helping somebody else. No; oftentimes we're releasing the guilt and we just help somebody else because we think that makes us feel better about ourselves; enabling them in their own bad decisions.

But it ultimately leads to a product. We would have never known about this incident if this was the end of the story, but I want you to notice what happens in verse 5. Here is the product: "And the woman conceived, and sent and told David, and said, I am with child. And David sent to Joab, saying, Send me, Uriah the Hittite. And Joab sent Uriah to David." What was the product of these bad decisions? A woman who was not his wife, pregnant with his child who ultimately, if you read the rest of this story, died on the seventh day and the man who was one of the most gifted military men in his army, dead without reason.

Now let me go back to the first point. When David got out of bed that night and decided to go on the roof he wasn't thinking, "You know, if I go on the roof tonight one of my best friends is going to die a death he doesn't deserve." That's not what he was thinking. He did not think, "If I go on the roof tonight this is going to end up worse than I ever thought." No, he went on the roof and said, "Well, let's just see what this is going to look like." That's how bad decisions happen in our lives. We say, "Well, it won't make that much difference. It's not that big a deal. Who's really going to care? It's not a big issue." Have you ever heard the term the straw that breaks the camel's back? There was not just one straw on that camel's back; you do know that, right? There were thousands of straws on that camel's back and the last one meant enough is enough - my knees can't handle any more. That's the recipe and I promise you when you begin to put those ingredients together in your life then you're going to get what David got every time.

So the question is this: how do we resolve it? Wherever we are, and maybe today you're at ingredient one, maybe you're here at ingredient five; it doesn't matter what stage of the game you are, the question is how do we change it? How do we resolve the bad decisions, either in our past, in our present and hopefully not in our future? And we have to go to Psalm 51. Psalm 51 is the passage of scripture where King David cries out to God in the midst of this situation in his life.

Just to give you a little filler material: yes, Bathsheba is pregnant; yes, Uriah is going to die. There is a man by the name of Nathan, a prophet of God. He comes to David and tells him a parable: "David, imagine there is a man who has ninety-nine sheep and his neighbor only has one. He steals the one from his neighbor. What should happen to that man?" David says, "You should put that man to death." And Nathan turns to David and says, "David, you're the man." In other words, you've done with Bathsheba the same thing. And what happens is rather than making excuses, rather than blaming somebody else, what David does in Psalm 51 to resolve the situation is he has the same recipe aimed in a different direction.

Let me show you what I mean. It always begins with being personal, right? Psalm 51:1. "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving kindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions." Do you realize that just in the first verse are two personal pronouns? I've done this; I've sinned; I've rebelled against You, God. Thirty-two times in Psalm 51 King David said what most of us are not willing to do: "It's my fault." We live in a culture today that can blame anybody for anything. We can blame our size on restaurants. We can blame our conditions on who knows what. We can do all kinds of scenarios to come up with it's their fault or it's this. If you want bad decisions resolved in your life, plain and simple, the first thing you have to do is be willing to man-up or woman-up and say I did this, I chose this path, I built this cake, I concocted this recipe. Everybody in our society wants to blame everybody else and David said, "No, I've done this." Thirty-two times in this passage

of scripture he said “I,” “my,” or “mine.” So he started with personal. Once again, we’re just working through the recipe aimed at a different direction.

Then he gets himself in a position. Verse 4: “Against thee, and thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in your sight: that thou might be justified when you speak and be clear when you judge.” The position that David put himself in when he wanted to resolve his bad decision is he literally got prostrate before God and he said, “God, yes, there is a woman in this situation. Yes, her husband is no longer alive. Yes, the country is in a mess; but ultimately it is You I am accountable to.” He prostrated himself; he got literally on his face and said, “Against You have I sinned.”

Now that’s a position: no longer making excuses, no longer saying, “But God, do You realize that anybody in my position would have done the same thing.” We’re good at making all those excuses. But David said I’m going to get in a position where I want God to know that He is the only One that can solve this because He’s the only One that been truly violated. So he uses the personal pronouns. He gets in a position of being prostrate before God.

But David recognized a process, that third ingredient that so many of us miss. I want you to look in verse 7. “7Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. 8Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice. 9Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. 10Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.” He desires for his sin to be absolved; he desires to be forgiven; he desires for all of this to be put behind him.

But then in verse 10 he says, “Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.” If you go to Genesis 1:1 it says, “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.” Do you know that in just this church alone, we have some fabulous artists. We have people in this church who can take paint, a canvas and put images up that just marvel me. We have fantastic artists not just in that area. We have people in this church that if you give them

a box of nails and a tree, they can make incredible furniture and they are able to make some amazing things. And there have been people throughout the years who have made a lot. But do you realize that none of you, no human being you have ever met, has ever created anything? You've never looked at nothing and said, "There it is." Yet, that is what God did in Genesis.

When David says "Create in me a clean heart, O God," let me tell you what he was saying. He was saying I can go to all the therapy and all the counseling and listen to all the tapes and all the books and sermons, but ultimately no other human being can fix this. Only God can take this messed up, broken life and this beat-up heart and make it new.

That's the key when we come to that point of salvation, when we say that I'm a sinner and I need Jesus to save me. Do you know what you're essentially saying? "God, I can't get there on my own. I can't get there because I'm good enough or smart enough. You're going to have to do it all." And that's exactly what we see here: the process, create in me a clean heart, O God.

But listen to the priority. Turn over to verse 14; I want you to see how David continues his prayer. "Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation: and my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness." Now if you're not familiar with bloodguiltiness, it's basically an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. Old Testament law was this: if you committed first-degree murder, if you killed somebody without any reason whatsoever except just the fact to eliminate them off the planet (by the way, that is what David did with Uriah the Hittite. He had no motive, he wasn't operating in self-defense; he was operating in selflessness), then under the old law the family of the one you killed had the right to come and kill you according to the law. They called it bloodguiltiness and David said deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God. You ask what does this have to do with not just his position or procedure; what does this have to do with his priorities? For thirteen verses, David said, "God, forgive me," and then he said, "God, fix it."

Let me share with you how most of our prayers go when we find ourselves in a bad decision: “O God, please don’t let this tear up my marriage. O God, please don’t let this ruin my kids. O God, please don’t let this take my finances.” Isn’t it amazing how oftentimes when we pray to God when we find ourselves in a mess, the first thing we pray is “God, fix it.” What did David show us as an example? He didn’t pray “God, fix it,” first. He said, “God, forgive me first and if You choose to fix it then that’s up to You.” There is a simple theological term that says it like this: we’d rather have forgiveness than restoration. And most of our positions are that we want restoration whether we’re forgiven or not. And David showed us that he was more interested in forgiveness than he was in restoration.

That leads to the final thing: the product of making the right decision in the midst of the bad decision. And this is where I want to focus our time and energy. This is where I want to hammer in; the crux of the matter. King David realized that he had made a mistake. He was willing to stand up to God and say I have sinned. He was willing to say to God and only God alone have I sinned against and He alone can forgive me and give me a clean heart. And he said more than restoration, I just truly want forgiveness in my life. We come to the last three verses of Psalm 51; the product of resolving to have God change or fix our bad decisions.

Psalm 51:17-19. “17The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise. 18Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion: build thou the walls of Jerusalem. 19Then shall thou be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offering and whole burnt offering: then shall they offer bullocks upon thine altar.”

You read those last three verses and you say what does this have to do with Bathsheba? What does this have to do with being restored to God and being forgiven by God for our sins? He starts talking about the temple worship, sacrifices, the walls of Zion and Jerusalem, and the daughters of Zion. What is all of this?

In fact, if you want to do your own study of Psalm 51 and you look up those last couple of verses, you can go to commentaries and those in the academic world when it comes to studying scripture, and often what you will find is this: because there is such a shift from asking forgiveness for what happened with Bathsheba to the restoration of Jerusalem, the Temple Mount and all those things, there are a lot of people who “are a lot smarter” than I, who have said that these last two verses were not originally a part of his prayer to God about Bathsheba, that they were inserted later. Let me give you a theological response to that: rubbish! The Bible says that all scripture is inspired by God; not just the parts we find convenient, not just the parts we can somehow rectify, not just the parts we can somehow understand.

So why is it there? Let me tell you what David understood that we need to understand. David understood that his culture, his society, and his community was destined to imitate him unless he changed his ways. His neighbors, his coworkers, his family, and I know what you’re thinking, “But David was the king. He had a greater influence than I do.” Read Psalm 51 and find any place where David said, “O God, Your king has messed up. O God, Your leader has messed up.” You know what words he uses? “My, I, mine.” He is a broken man of God who says if I will quit the madness and let God have control of my life then revival will take place.

Hear me clearly: we will not have revival when Republicans and Democrats decide to get along. That’s not revival; I don’t know what it is, but it won’t produce revival. We say we’ll have a revival in our country when this or this happens. Let me tell you what happens. If you want revival in your country then you do what David did: you say I have messed up, I have sinned against God, I have listened to the wrong voices, I have gone to the wrong places, I’ve compromised my life and today I say, “No more, God. Take my life and lead it.” That’s what will start revival and do you know why? It will rub off on your family; it will rub off on your neighbors, it will rub off on your coworkers. And pretty soon everybody in your sphere of influence is

noticing that God has changed your life. That's what happens; that's called revival. And David understood that if there was going to be revival in the land, if the land was going to turn to God then he and he alone, if nobody else, needed to draw a circle around himself and say, "Start here, God."

Today I think we all seek and want revival. I think all of us desire change. I think all of us want our world altered for the purpose of God. And you've wondered how do we do it? You do what David did and say, "I've messed up, God. I need You to intervene in my life. Cleanse me and give me a new heart and start right here." Let's pray.